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A MAKER OF HISTORY

BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM,

Author of "The Master Mummer," "A Prince of Sinners," "Mysterious Mr. Sabin," "Anna the Adventurer."

CHAPTER XII.

AN OLD FRIEND.

It was perhaps as well for Andrew Pelham that he could not see Phyllis look as she entered the room. An English gentleman, she had been told, was waiting to see her, and she had thought of no one but Duncombe. It was true she had sent him away, but only an hour ago the marquise had told her that her emancipation was close at hand. He, too, might have had a hint! The little smile, however, died away from her lips as she saw who was waiting for her with such manifest impatience.

"You, Andrew?" she exclaimed in amazement. "Why, however did you find me?"

He took both her hands in his. The look upon his face was transfigured.

"At last! At last!" he exclaimed. "Never mind how I found you! Tell me, what does it all mean? Are you here of your own free will?"

"Absolutely," she answered.

"It was you at Runtun?"

"Yes."

"Under a false name—with a man who committed robbery?"

She shrugged her shoulders a little wearily.

"My dear Andrew," she said, "I will admit that I have been doing all manner of incomprehensible things. I couldn't explain everything. It would take too long. What I did for Guy's sake, and of my own free will. It will be all over in a day or two now, and we shall be coming back to Raynesworth. Then I will tell you tales of our adventures which will make your hair stand on end."

"It isn't true about Guy, then?" he exclaimed.

She hesitated for a moment.

"Andrew," she said, "I cannot tell you anything. It must sound rather horrid of me, but I cannot help it. I want you to go away. In a day or two I will write."

He looked at her in pained bewilderment.

"But, Phyllis," he protested, "I am one of your oldest friends! You ask me to go away and leave you here with strangers, without a word of explanation. Why, I have been weeks searching for you."

"Andrew," she said, "I know it. I don't want to be unkind. I don't want you to think that I have forgotten that you are, as you say, one of my oldest friends. But there are times when one's friends are a source of danger rather than pleasure. Frankly, this is one of them."

His face darkened. He looked slowly around the magnificent room. He saw little, but what he could distinguish was impressive.

"Your riddle," he said gravely, "are hard to read. You want me to go away and leave you here?"

"You must," she said firmly.

"Did you treat Duncombe like this?" he asked in a blind fit of jealousy.

"You have no right to ask me such a question," she answered coldly.

"Not the right! Not the right!" he repeated. "Who else has, then? Haven't I watched you grow from a beautiful, capricious child into the woman you are? Haven't I taught you to play with you, done your bidding blindly ever since you came into your kingdom? Haven't I felt the pain and the joy of you in my heart? Who else has a better right, then? Duncombe, who came here, a stranger to you—or is it one of your new friends?"

She came close to him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Don't be foolish, Andrew!" she said softly.

His whole expression changed. The bitterness left his tone.

"Ah, Phyllis!" he said. "That is more like yourself."

"And I want you," she said, "to be like your old self. You have always been my best friend, Andrew. I hope you will always be that."

He tried to look into her face. It seemed to him that there was a little unnecessary emphasis in her words.

"I am not a child, you know," she continued. "I am quite old enough to take care of myself. You must believe that, Andrew. You must go away, and not worry about me. You will do this, please, because I ask you!"

"If I must," he said reluctantly. "I will go away, but not to worry about you—that is impossible. You seem to me surrounded by all the medieval terrors which confronted the emancipation of princesses in our fairy books. Only a short time ago Duncombe implored me to follow his example and leave you and Paris alone. The detective whom I brought with me has been shadowed ever since we left Paris. Last night he left me for a few hours, and this morning when I returned he was in the hospital. He is lying there with the back of his head beaten in—garroted, of course, the police say, looking for plunder. How can you ask me to be easy in my mind about you?"

She smiled reassuringly.

"No harm will come to me here, I can promise you," she said. "It is you who run the most risk if you only knew it. Sir George Duncombe gave you the best advice when he tried to get you to return to England."

"I cannot leave Lloyd now until he has recovered," Andrew answered. "Tell me, Phyllis, has Duncombe found you out? Has he been here?"

"Yes," she answered. "I sent him away—as I am sending you."

"Has he ever told you," Andrew asked, "why he was willing in the first instance to come to Paris in search of you?"

"No," she answered. "Wasn't it because he was your friend?"

He shook his head.

"It is his affair, not mine," he said with a sigh. "I wish some day."

"You won't tell me, Andrew?"

"No! I will go now! You know where to send for me if you should need help. I can find my way down, thank you. I have a guide from the hotel outside."

The marquise swept into the room as he passed out, an impression of ermine and lace and perfume.

"Another of your English lovers, ma belle?" she asked.

"Scarcely that," Phyllis answered. "He is a very old friend, and he was rather hard to get rid of."

"I think," the marquise said, "you will get rid of all your English friends, for the sake of one, eh?"

The marquise stared insolently into the girl's face. Phyllis only laughed.

"One is usually considered the ideal number—in our country," she remarked demurely.

"But the one?" the marquise continued. "He would not be one of these cold, heavy countrymen of yours, no? You have learnt better perhaps over here?"

It was a cross-examination, but Phyllis could not imagine its drift.

"I have not had very much opportunity over here, have I, to amend my ideals?" she asked. "I think the only two Frenchmen I have met are the

marquis and that languid young man with the green tie, the Vicomte de Bergillac, wasn't it?"

The marquise watched her charge closely.

"Well," she said, "he is comme il faut, is he not? You find him more elegant, more chic than your Englishmen, eh?"

Phyllis shook her head regretfully.

"To me," she admitted, "he seemed like an exceedingly precocious spoilt child!"

"He is 23," the marquise declared.

"He is 23?" she asked.

"Well," she said, "I do not think that I shall amend my ideals for the sake of the Vicomte de Bergillac!"

The marquise looked at her doubtfully.

"Tell me, child," she said, "you mean, then, that of the two—your English Sir George Duncombe and Henri—you would prefer Sir George?"

Phyllis looked at her with twinkling eyes.

"You would really like to know?" she asked.

"Yes!"

"Sir George Duncombe—infinity!"

The marquise seemed to have recovered her good spirits.

"Come, little one," she said, "you lose color in the house. I will take you for a drive!"

Andrew, conscious that he was being followed, sat down at a cafe on his way home, and bade his guide leave him for a little time. Instantly there was the soft rustle of feminine skirts by his side, and a woman seated herself on the next chair.

"Monsieur has not been up to the Cafe Montmartre lately?"

Pelham turned his head. It was the young lady from Vienna.

"No," he answered. "I have not been there since I had the pleasure of seeing mademoiselle."

"Monsieur has discovered all that he wanted to know?"

He nodded a little wearily.

"Yes, I think so."

She drew her chair quite close to his. The sable of her turban had almost brushed his cheek, and the perfume of the violets at her bosom was strong in his nostrils.

"Monsieur has seen the young lady?"

"I have seen her," he answered.

"Monsieur is indebted to me," she said softly, "for some information. Let me ask him one question. Is it true, this story in the newspapers, of the finding of this young man's body?"

"Monsieur Guy Poynton really dead?"

"I know no more than we all read in the newspapers," he answered.

"His sister spoke of him as dead?"

She asked.

"I cannot discuss this matter with you, mademoiselle," he answered.

"Monsieur is ungrateful," she declared, with a little grimace. "It is only that which I desire to know. He was such a beau garçon, that young Englishman. You will tell me that?"

She whispered.

He shook his head.

"Mademoiselle will excuse me," he said. "I am going to take a carriage to my hotel."

"On the way to leave me at my rooms, if you will be so kind," she suggested, laying her hand upon his arm.

"Mademoiselle will excuse me," he answered, turning away. "Good afternoon!"

Mademoiselle also took a carriage, and drove to a large house at the top of the Champs Elysees. She was at once admitted, and passed with the air of one familiar with the place into a small room at the back of the house, where a man was sitting at a table writing. He looked up as she entered.

"Well?"

She threw herself into a chair.

"I have been following the Englishman, Pelham, all day," she said in German. "He has seen Miss Poynton. I have talked with him since at a cafe, but he would tell me nothing. He has evidently been warned."

The man grumbled as he resumed his writing for me.

"That fact alone should be enough for us," he remarked. "If there is anything to conceal we can guess what it is. These amateurs who are in league with the secret service are the devil! I would as soon resign. What with them and the regular secret service, Paris is an impossible city for us. Where we would watch we are watched ourselves. The streets and cafes bristle with spies! I do not wonder that you find success so difficult, mademoiselle."

"I haven't done so badly!" she protested.

"No, for you have not been set easy tasks. Can you tell me, though, where that young Englishman disappeared to when he left the Cafe Montmartre before your very eyes? Can you tell me whether the secret service got hold of this story, how much the French government believed of it, whether they have communicated with the English government, and how much they know? Beyond these things, it is not your province to see, or mine, mademoiselle, and it is not for us to guess at or inquire into the meaning of things. Tell me, is it worth while to have this man Pelham put out of the way for a time?"

She shook her head.

"I do not think so," she answered. "He is quite stupid. The other, Sir George Duncombe, he was different. If he had stayed in Paris he would have been worth watching."

A bell rang. The man rose.

"The chief," he said, "be at the cafe to-night."

Mademoiselle went away thoughtfully.

"It is over this affair," she said to herself. "Carl knows everything!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEWSPAPER SENSATION.

Spencer, whose recovery during the last few days had been as rapid as the first development of his indisposition, had just changed for dinner, and was lighting a cigarette d'appertit when, without waiting to be announced, the Vicomte de Bergillac entered the room. Spencer, with lightning-like intuition, knew that his time was come.

"Off with your coat, man, and get your code books out. I am going to give you the most sensational story which has ever appeared in your paper!" he exclaimed. "Only, remember this! It must appear tomorrow morning. I am arranging for the French papers to have it. Yours shall be the first to get it. Glance through these sheets. They contain the story of l'affaire Poynton!"

Spencer was master of the gist of the thing in a very few moments. His eyes were bright with excitement.

"Who guarantees this?" he asked quickly.

"My uncle has signed it," Henri de Bergillac answered, "and at the bottom of the page there you will see the signature of the man who signed it. You understand l'affaire Poynton now? It is very simple. That English boy actually witnessed a meeting between the czar and the emperor, and turns up in Paris with a loose sheet of a treaty between the two, relative to an attack upon England. Our people got hold of him at Cafe Montmartre, and we have hidden him away ever since. Our friends, the Germans, who seem to have had some suspicions about him, have filled the city with spies, but from the first we have kept them off the scent. We had a little difficulty in convincing our friends your country people, but we managed to borrow a few papers from the German ambassador whilst he was staying at a country house in England, which were sufficient."

Spencer was already writing. His coat lay on the floor where he had thrown it.

"Don't go for a moment, De Bergillac," he said. "I want to ask you a few things. I can talk and code at the same time. What about Miss Poynton?"

"Well, we had to take care of her, too," De Bergillac said. "Of course, all her inquiries over here would have led to nothing. She knew her way to the English embassy, so we walked her off from the Cafe Montmartre one night and took her to a friend of mine, the Marquise de St. Ethol. We told her a little of the truth, and a little I'm afraid, which was an exaggeration. Anyhow, we kept her quiet, and we got her to go to England for us with Toquet. They had a very narrow shave down the Channel, but she got away. After this," Spencer said with a smile, "the secret service people proper will have to look to their laurels. It is a triumph for the amateurs."

The vicomte twirled his tiny black moustache.

"Yes," he said, "we have justified ourselves. It has cost us something, though."

"You mean?"

"Louis!"

Spencer stopped writing.

"It was an affair of a million francs," the vicomte said. "I hope he has got the money."

Spencer resumed his work.

"The baron a traitor!" he exclaimed.

"Where is he?"

"In England. We are not vindictive. If the Germans paid him a million francs they got nothing for it. He has been watched from the first. We knew of it the moment he came to terms with them. He only knows bare facts. Nothing beyond that. He is good, I think. We shall not interfere."

"Tell me why," Spencer said, "you were so down on all of us who joined in the search for the Poyntons."

"We could not afford to run any risks of your discovering a clue," De Bergillac answered, "because you in your turn were closely watched by German spies, hoping to discover them through you. He is good, I think, but strike hard at all of you who interfered. I was sorry for little Flossie—but she knew the risk she ran. We had to stop you, induce Duncombe to leave Paris and knock on the head a fool of an English detective for fear he might discover something. Monsieur Pelham was getting into danger, but, of course, it is all over now. Tomorrow we are bringing Guy into Paris."

Spencer nodded.

"Where is Duncombe?" he asked.

"Back in Paris," De Bergillac answered. "Arrived here with me today. He is much in love with the beautiful sister. Alas! It was to him that she entrusted the missing page of that treaty which she found in her brother's luggage. Some day I must tell you of my adventures in England last night, when I went over to get it and found Louis a little ahead of me."

"Some day," Spencer murmured, writing for dear life, with the perspiration streaming down his forehead. "My dear vicomte do you mind ringing the bell? I want my servant. I must telegraph my paper to warn them of this. They must clear two columns of type for me."

The vicomte did as he was asked. Then he turned towards the door.

"I will leave you," he said. "The dust of England is still in my throat. Absit, a bath, and a dinner. Au revoir, mon ami. Confess that I have kept the promise which Louis made you. It is what you call a coup this, eh?"

Out on the boulevards the papers were selling like wildfire. The vicomte bought one, and sitting down outside a cafe ordered absinthe. The great headlines attracted him at once. He slipped his absinthe and smiled to himself.

"The play commences," he murmured. "I must return to Monsieur Spencer."

Spencer was still working like a madman.

"I must interrupt you for a moment," De Bergillac said. "I have brought you an evening paper. The Baltic fleet has sunk half a dozen English fishing boats, and the whole country is in a frenzy. It is the beginning."

Spencer nodded.

"Leave the paper, there's a good fellow," he said. "I will look it through presently. If there is time if there is only time this will be the greatest night of my life. No other paper has a hint, you say?"

"Not one!"

"If I could put back the clock a single hour," Spencer muttered, "Never mind! Williams, more sheets."

De Bergillac took his leave. He had telephoned for his motor, which was waiting outside. He gave the order to drive to his room. On the way he passed the great pile of buildings in the Louvre. In a room at the extreme end of the pile a light was burning. De Bergillac looked at it curiously. A small brougham, which he recognized, stood outside.

"If one could see inside," he muttered. "It should be interesting!"

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In a sense it was interesting. Monsieur Grisson sat there in front of his open table. His secretary's place by his side was vacant. Opposite sat a tall man with gray hair and dark moustache. He was dressed for the evening, and his breast glittered with stars and orders.

"It is exceedingly kind of you, monsieur," he said, "to grant me this interview at so short notice. I was most anxious to apprise you of news, which as yet I believe has not found its way into your papers. You have read accounts of a Russian attack upon an English fishing fleet, but you have not yet been informed of the presence—the undoubted presence—of Japanese torpedo boats concealed among them."

Monsieur Grisson raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed, no," he answered. "We have not even heard a rumor of anything of the sort."

"Nevertheless, their presence was in-

dubitable," the prince declared. "In those circumstances, monsieur, you can doubtless understand that our reply to any protests on the part of England will be of an unapologetic nature. We should not for a moment allow ourselves to be dictated to by the allies of our enemy."

"Naturally," Monsieur Grisson answered. "On the other hand, you surely do not wish to embroil yourself in a quarrel with England at the present moment?"

"We wish to quarrel with no one," the prince answered haughtily. "At the same time, we are not afraid of England. We recognize the fact that if war should come it is an independent affair, and does not come under the obligations of our alliance. We ask, therefore, for your neutrality alone."

Monsieur Grisson bowed.

"But, prince," he said gravely, "you speak lightly enough of the possibilities of war, but surely you must know that the English fleet in the Channel and at Gibraltar altogether outmatches the Baltic fleet?"

"A Russian," the prince answered grandly, "is the present situation of affairs. It is a quarrel which concerns Russia and England alone. France would remain benevolently neutral. As you have remarked, the obligations of our treaty do not apply to such a case."

"The prince played nervously with the star at his chest. Both men were well aware that up to now they had been merely playing with words.

"There is another contingency," the Russian remarked, "which, now we are upon the subject, it would, perhaps, be as well to allude to. The relations between Germany and England, as you know, just now are very sorely strained. If Germany should take advantage of the present situation to make a demonstration against England, that, of course, would not, from your point of view, affect the situation?"

Monsieur Grisson looked like a man who sees before him amazing things.

"My dear prince," he said, "do not let us misunderstand one another. You cannot by any possibility be suggesting that Germany might associate herself with you in your resistance to possible English demands?"

The Russian leaned back in his chair.

"Germany is on the spot," he remarked, "and knows the fact of the case. She has proofs of the presence of Japanese torpedo boats among the English fishing fleet. Her natural love of fair play might possibly lead her to espouse our cause in this particular instance. This, of course, would make for peace. If Germany commands, England will obey. She could not do otherwise."

"You have introduced, my dear prince," Monsieur Grisson said, "an altogether new phase of this question, and one which merits the most grave consideration. Am I to understand that there is any arrangement between Germany and yourself with respect to this question?"

"Scarcely anything so definite as an arrangement," the prince answered. "Merely an understanding."

Monsieur Grisson had the air of a man who had just received grave tidings of his dearest friend.

"Is this, Monsieur le Prince," he said, "entirely in accord with our own treaty obligations?"

Monsieur Grisson bowed.

"We do not consider it to be in contravention to them," the prince answered.

The gravity of Monsieur Grisson's manner grew even more pronounced.

"My dear prince," he said, "you are doubtless aware that during the last few weeks there have been some very strange rumors about as to a meeting between your master and the emperor of Germany, and an agreement which was forthwith signed between them. I need not remark that all such rumors were entirely discredited here. Such a meeting kept secret from us would, of course, be very seriously considered here."

The prince smiled. He remained admirably self-possessed, though the very veins in his forehead were swollen with anger.

"A canon of the sort has reached my ears," he remarked. "Some English boy, I believe, imagined or dreamed that he saw some such meeting. We scarcely need, I think, to discuss this seriously."

"Personally, I agree with you," Monsieur Grisson said smoothly. "My ministry, however, seem to have been a little impressed by the boy's story. An autograph letter from the czar, denying it, would, perhaps, make our negotiations more easy."

"It shall be forthcoming," the prince remarked, rising. "By the by, I hear reports of great activity from Cherbourg. More maneuvers, eh?"

Monsieur Grisson shrugged his shoulders.

"Our new naval chief," he remarked, "is a marvel of industry. You know the English proverb about the new brewer, eh?"

The prince bowed.

"During the next few hours," he remarked, "many things may happen. You will be always accessible?"

"I shall not leave my post, prince," Monsieur Grisson answered. "You will find me here at any time!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAN WHO SAVED HIS COUNTRY.

On the following morning the inhabitants of London, Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg for a sum varying from a halfpenny to a penny were treated to sensationalism as thrilling as any six-shilling shocker hot from the press and assured of its half million circulation. One English and one French newspaper outdid their competitors by publishing side by side with their account of the exploits of the Russian fleet a marvelous but circumstantial story of a meeting and alliance between the rulers of Germany and Russia. The eyes of the whole world were turned towards Kiel, and more wonderful rumors still flashed backwards and forwards along the wires throughout Europe. A great mobilization can be kept a secret up to a certain point, but when men and ships are collected and ready the truth must out.

At an unusually early hour Monsieur Grisson, supported now by two members of his ministry, received a visit from the Russian and German ambassadors, Prince Korndorf and Count von Munchen. The usual compliments were quickly exchanged.

"I have asked my friend Count von Munchen to accompany me," Prince Korndorf explained, "because we are here to speak with you on a matter concerning which our interests are identical. You have read the demand which England has dared to lay before my master with reference to the encounter in the North sea."

Monsieur Grisson bowed.

"I have studied them with great interest," he admitted.

"I do not need tell you then that they are routed with indignation by my master and his advisers," the prince answered. "Neither shall we permit for a single moment the detention of our fleet upon its mission."

"That means, then, war with England," Monsieur Grisson remarked quietly.

"Unless they instantly withdraw their insolent demands—undoubtedly," the prince answered.

Monsieur Grisson turned to the German ambassador.

"You are prepared, then, to give Russia your moral support?" the president asked.

"We are prepared to do more," the count answered boldly. "If England persists in her demands we are prepared to demonstrate against her."

Monsieur Grisson assumed a very grave expression.

"I too," he said, "have lost no time in endeavoring to solve the mystery of the North Sea. I have been in communication with the English ambassador, and I have collected all the evidence possible. There is absolutely no proof obtainable of the presence of any Japanese craft among

the English fishing fleet. I submit, therefore, that this is a case for arbitration. I consider that up to the present our friends on the other side of the channel have displayed commendable moderation in a time of great excitement, and I am happy to say that I have the authority of Lord Fothergill himself for saying that they will consent to submitting the affair to a commission for arbitration."

The president's words were received with chilling silence. It was the prince who, after a short silence, replied.

"Arbitration," he said coldly, "does not commend itself to us. We have been insulted. Our country and our gallant fleet have been held up to ridicule throughout the whole English press. We are tired of being dictated to and bullied by a weaker power—the openly declared ally of our enemy. England has long been seeking for a casus belli with us. At last she has found it."

Monsieur Grisson whispered for a moment to one of his colleagues. Then he turned once more to the prince.

"Let us understand one another, Monsieur le Prince," he said. "and you, Count von Munchen! You have come to announce to me your intention to jointly make war upon England. St. Petersburg is to refuse her

Continued on Page 11.

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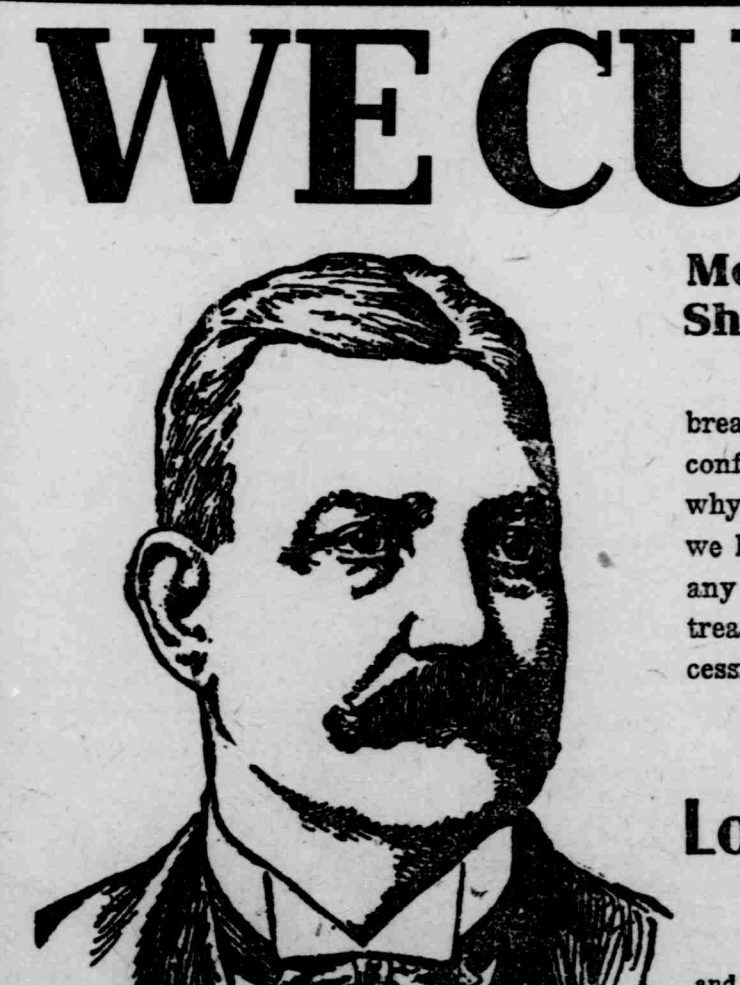
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